

Good afternoon Distinguished Representatives,

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Katherine Escalante and I am a sophomore studying Political Science and Philosophy at Eastern Connecticut State University.

From a young age, education has served as a beacon of hope in my life. As a DACA student from South Dakota, I have faced numerous obstacles in pursuing my dream of higher education. Yet, I have refused to let those obstacles define me. Instead, I have used my determination and drive to overcome each and every single one of them and make my dreams a reality. I have by no means done that alone.

Growing up I had little to no access to any type of health services, mental health support, and career development services— for the first time in my life, that is not the case. I cannot overstate the implications of this for me. Access to these resources has allowed me to pursue my dream of higher education with confidence and determination.

Eastern has provided resources, networks, and opportunities that I would have not been able to access without the University's support. During my first year at Eastern, I was able to create a philosophy club on campus, which I am the President of, and happy to share that it is one of the most attended clubs on campus. Later that year through Eastern's career services, I landed my first summer internship. Last semester, through the networks built at Eastern I was recruited by an organization that allowed me to sit face-to-face with legislators at Capitol hill and advocate for myself and my community. Later this semester, I get to present at my first research conference. The resources that leveraged my success in each of those instances are the reality behind today, with those resources I have been able to have a transformative educational experience.

Investing in public higher education is not only an investment in infrastructure and institutions but in people and their futures. The support I received from Eastern has allowed me to thrive both personally and professionally.

The students of the CSCU system are strong, gritty, and clever—by investing in us, you are planting the seed for a better future, a future filled with growth, innovation, and opportunity for thousands.